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AN EXPLORATION OF THE RIO DE ORO, COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA

By H. Case Willcox

[With separate map, Pl. VII, facing p. 382]

In the Republics of Colombia and Venezuela there exist large territories virtually unknown even within short distance of highways of communication. Regions trodden by the *conquistadores* in the earliest days of the discovery remain the haunts of savage tribes. This is the case in the Opón valley. Although this valley lies within sight of the Magdalena and was ascended by Quesada in 1536, a journey through it today is described as attended with no little risk. Farther north the Motilone Indians of the Sierra de Perijá close a long stretch of country on the Colombia-Venezuela boundary. Already before Quesada's expedition Alfinger had crossed the Sierra on his way from Lake Maracaibo to the César valley. We know little more of it today.[1] Some fifty years ago the Colombian government attempted a forcible "civilization" of the Motilones. The sole result was to provoke attack on the adjacent settlements (Valle de Upar) and to close the only trail across the Sierra de Perijá into Venezuela.

A special interest, however, attaches to this portion of the Colombian Andes. About Pamplona (latitude 7° 20′ N.) the Eastern Cordillera divides into a northeastern branch, the Venezuelan Andes, and a northern branch that dies out in the Montes de Oca. The northern branch constitutes the divide between drainage to Lake Maracaibo and the Magdalena, and in part (Sierra de Perijá) it forms the boundary between Colombia and Venezuela. The earliest boundary treaty between the two republics (1833) defined this section of their common boundary as:

> . . . the crests of the Montes de Oca and by these crests and those of the Perijá mountains until they meet the head-waters of the Oro River . . . the waters of this river downstream to its confluence with the Catatumbo.

The Sierra de Perijá has remained unknown, and no boundary disputes have arisen in connection with it. The above line was confirmed in the King of Spain's award (1891) but it has not yet been demarcated.[2]

A word must be said as to the usage of the term Sierra de Perijá. Locally the name is restricted to the eastern or Venezuelan side of the chain. On the Colombian side different sections go under different names. The more southerly portion is known as the Sierra de Motilone, and its southward continuation is termed the Cerro (or Cerros) de Bobali and the Sierra de Ocaña. This usage has been discussed in the article "An Exploration of the Sierra de Perijá, Venezuela" by the late Theodoor de Booy.[3] In 1918 Mr. de Booy conducted an expedition into the Sierra from the Venezuelan side about latitude 10° 30′ N. Farther south explorations have been carried on by various oil companies interested in the Barco Concession. This concession is described in the deeds as lying south of the Rio de Oro and between the Catatumbo River on the east and the Cerro Bobali and Sierra de Ocaña on the west. These explorations included a certain amount of work on the Rio de Oro not far from the petroleum wells and on the western flank of the Sierra Motilone and about the Cerro Bobali.

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[1] Wilhelm Sievers: Die Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta und die Sierra de Perijá, *Zeitschr. der Gesell. für Erdkunde*, Vol. 23, 1888, pp. 1–158; reference on p. 113.

[2] On November 3, 1916, a convention was signed between Colombia and Venezuela which provided that the President of Switzerland should act as arbiter for such portions of the boundary as are in dispute. A dispatch from Geneva dated May 10, 1921, announces that the Swiss Federal Council will arbitrate the dispute and that the necessary surveys will be made by Swiss engineers.

In 1920 the writer crossed the chain in reconnoitering on behalf of the Carib Syndicate for a route feasible for a railroad and pipe line from the navigable waters of the Magdalena to the petroleum wells which are situated on the Rio de Oro near its junction with the Catatumbo. A brief account of the expedition will now be given.

EXPLORATIONS ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE SIERRA MOTILONE AND CERRO BOBALI

In June, 1920, I started from Cartagena in company with Mr. M. J. Bolan,[4] a railroad contractor and explorer, proceeding via Calamares by the Cartagena-Calamares railway (of which the major portion was constructed by Mr. Bolan in 1892) and up the Magdalena River to El Banco, a town of 4,000 population at the junction of the Magdalena and César Rivers. From El Banco we went up the Rio César, across Lake Zapatosa and landing at Soloa proceeded to Curumani in the foothills of the Sierra de Motilone where some investigations were made of the Rio Animito valley. We then returned to the Magdalena at Tamalameque, some miles above El Banco. Were communications available Tamalameque would serve as the outlet for Cúcuta and other interior towns of the department of Santander Norte which must now find their markets in Venezuelan territory. Various projects have been advanced for opening up such communications. Among them is the cattle trail constructed in 1885 but abandoned shortly afterwards. As we subsequently proved, even knowledge of its course had been lost. From Tamalameque we followed it for 67 miles, passing around the western shoulder of the central member of the three Cerro Bobali peaks at an elevation of 6,750 feet and climbing down four and a half miles on the other side and into the Barco Concession at an elevation of 5,000 feet. At this point it became clear that the route was not feasible for any type of

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[3] *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 6, 1918, pp. 385–410.

[4] Mr. Bolan, who has had 30 years' experience in western South America, organized and equipped my expedition and was directly responsible for its success. His knowledge of the language, customs, and racial traits of the natives was invaluable in securing local co-operation.

FIG. I

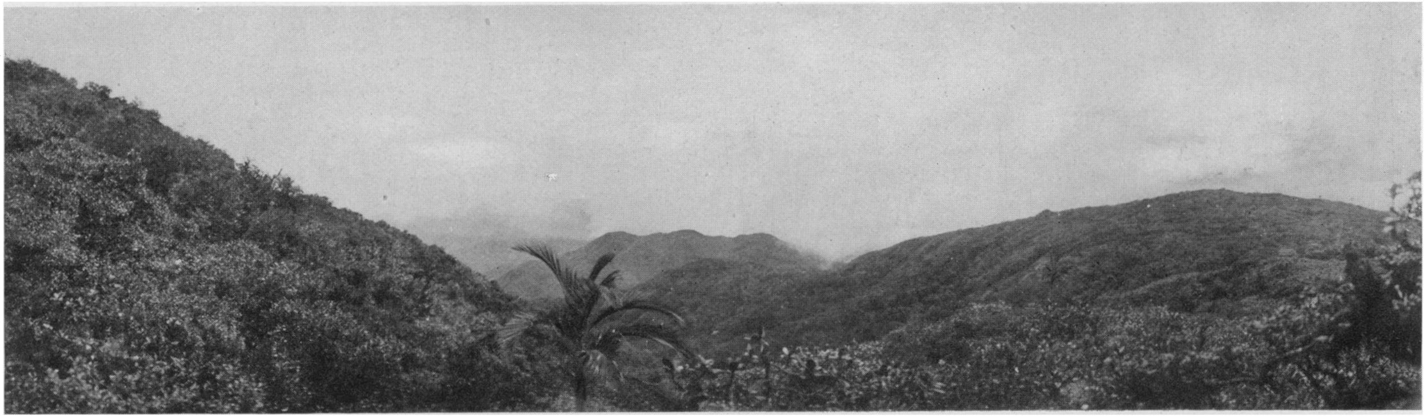

FIG. 2

FIG. I—Bolan's Pass with Mt. Willcox in the background. (Photograph by courtesy of the Carib Syndicate.)
FIG. 2—The divide between the Magdalena and the Lake Maracaibo drainage seen from Mt. Guzman. (Photograph by courtesy of the Carib Syndicate.)

construction, and we turned our attention to the central and northern peaks of the Cerro Bobali. I measured their height by the boiling water method and found them to be 7,750 feet and 7,928 feet respectively. The northern peak, the highest elevation within a radius of 50 miles, is plainly visible to the traveler in fair weather while journeying on the Magdalena River at a distance of possibly 100 miles.

A few weeks later we made a partial exploration of the Colorado and Hondo Rivers, two of the eastern tributaries of the Magdalena system. The "Arroyo Hondo," as it is locally known, passes through the main sierra between the northern peak of the Cerro Bobali and the southern end of the Sierra Motilone. This is an instance of river capture, the stream now having its source in a basin on the eastern side of the mountain range. The eastern and northeastern edges of this basin are of a height ranging about 5,000 feet to 6,500 feet. Through a gap of the lower elevation—named "Bolan Pass"—we located a route for the construction of a transportation system which when completed will permit the petroleum of the Barco Concession to be transported to the Rio Magdalena.

Our next work was to construct a mule trail connecting the point known locally as Pesqueria on Lake Zapatosa with the pass. During the construction of this trail, which passes slightly southwest of the village of Curumani and on up the Rio Animito, I had occasion to make a full exploration of the Animito. At a point seven miles south of Curumani the river forks into eastern and western branches. The eastern branch finds its source in the Sierra Motilone; the western branch is formed by the union of three streams—two of which are named by local hunters the "Rio Horno" and the "Quebrada de Casa Piedra" (Ravine of the Stone House). The name of the latter is derived from the fact that at a sharp bend of this stream a huge cavern 100 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 8 feet high has been carved out of solid rock by the downrushing floods.

Expedition Down the Rio de Oro Planned

About this latitude (10° N.–7° N.) the Sierra has two well-marked rainy seasons. On the western side the rainy seasons are from mid-April to mid-May and from mid-September to mid-November; on the eastern side they are somewhat later. In the latter part of October every day there was a heavy downpour of rain continuing on an average 14 out of the 24 hours. This circumstance rendered any further construction impossible, and it was decided that I should proceed ahead with a picked party of men over the sierras and down into the valley which we had observed from the Cerro Bobali lying on the eastern side of Bolan Pass. This valley we hoped would be found to contain one of the sources of the Rio de Oro.

Up to this point, the summit of the mountain range, we had encountered no signs of the Motilone Indians; but the peons of my party could not easily overcome their dread of the savages, who are reputed to shoot, with great precision, arrows four or five feet in length tipped with deadly poison. At first it appeared as if we should not be able to secure peons; but skillful argument and the promise of double pay eventually secured twelve men, ten Colombians and two Venezuelans. They were well armed and carried ten days' provisions, the maximum that could be carried under the circumstances. Dogs were also taken with us to assist in preventing a surprise attack by the Indians.

Crossing the Divide

On October 24, 1920, we left Campamento La Mesa de Bolívar, elevation 4,260 feet, where for a day or two we had been organizing our expedition, and proceeded up over the Sierra Motilone, crossing the summit at 6,400 feet where a temperature of 58° F. was recorded. We now passed into the cloud zone, and progress became very slow on account of the change in the vegetation to what is known by the natives as *loma*. This vegetation grows to an average height of 20 feet and consists of thickly tangled vines and moss, dripping with moisture. It is found enveloping all peaks in this vicinity from an elevation of 5,500 feet and upwards. It took us until October 28 to cut a passage over the summit and down to a small stream which fortunately proved to be one of the sources of the southern branch of the Rio de Oro. It was a mountain torrent with strong current and a cross-section area of approximately 20 square feet. We gained it at an elevation of 3,400 feet and there established our second camp, five miles northeast of Bolan Pass. Here the terrain was covered with dense forest quite plentifully stocked with such small game as gray monkeys and wild turkeys.

Upper Course of the Rio de Oro

Below an elevation of 1,500 feet we met with an insect quite common to these regions. It is known locally as the *jejan* and is a type of small fly, very persistent and annoying. Until we reached elevations under 1,000 feet the number of mosquitoes were surprisingly few, and at night there were practically none at all, as it becomes quite cool after sundown.

Rain fell throughout the nights of the journey and for a great part of the days, falling possibly on the average more than 12 out of every 24 hours. Numerous small creeks joined the branch of the Rio de Oro down which we were progressing, and at the point reached on October 30 it had become a fair-sized river. On this date at an elevation of 1,800 feet we passed a more considerable tributary coming in from the southwest. I believe it to be the stream referred to on some maps as the Rio Loro. On the following day we crossed a stretch of flat land covered with heavy jungle in which were found signs of tapir, deer, and wild pig. Our dogs frightened up a troop of the latter, and they charged our party while we were proceeding along in single file. It is a well-known fact that these animals once started in a certain direction will not deviate from their course but will attack with their tusks every living thing in their path. The only thing to do when one finds oneself in line with such a charge is to step behind a tree and endeavor to attract as little attention as possible. On this occasion we shot one of the pigs, which are considered excellent meat by the peons. On the afternoon of this date while wading along down the river, which now was of considerable size, we had what proved to be our last view of the point in the sierras where we had crossed. It was 24 miles away from the spot where we were and 78 degrees west of south.

That night we camped a short distance up on the slope of a small sierra near the river. Rain fell continuously and heavily all night, and in the morning the river had risen so much that it was impossible to wade along the stream bed. We therefore took to the high ground and were greatly surprised to find an old trail, evidently constructed with considerable labor. It consisted of a path about three feet wide, excavated at some former time and laid along very gradual grades. It was the continuation of the cattle trail from Tamalameque to Cúcuta. The only existing maps show this trail after crossing over the Cerro Bobali as turning to the southwest and passing onward to Cúcuta; but we found, on the contrary that after dropping down to the Rio de Oro the trail follows the eastern and southern banks of the stream until it comes to the point where we encountered it, about 30 miles to the northeast of Cerro Bobali. We followed it where convenient for 30 miles more, but as it was quite overgrown with jungle much cutting was necessitated.

The Northern Branch of the Rio de Oro

At midday of November 3 and at a distance of 43 miles from the crest of the sierras we reached the northern branch of the Rio de Oro. This is a stream of somewhat larger size than the one along which we were traveling. Its source is, I believe, in a deep depression which I had noticed on the eastern side of the Sierra Motilone many miles to the north of our crossing point, I should say almost directly opposite Curumani. Near the junction of the two branches of the Oro the terrain consists of flat land, heavily jungled, while scattered over the surface are isolated boulders of hard rock.

Abandoned Fishing Camps

The following day we passed some abandoned Indian fishing camps a short distance above the junction of the Rio Tomas with the Rio de Oro. The Rio Tomas which enters from the south is, if anything, slightly larger than the Oro. Both rivers were here of great depth and strength of current. Here we found our first crocodiles, the presence of which made it impracticable to ford by swimming. After a short search we found some *balsa* trees, so known because of the very buoyant character of the wood which permits the tree to float readily even when still green.[5] With these we constructed a raft of sufficient size to carry in three trips our entire party across the river.

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[5] An interesting note on the occurrence of *balsa* wood is given by W. W. Rowlee: Synopsis of the Genus *Ochroma*, with Descriptions of New Species, *Journ. Washington Acad. of Sci.*, Vol. 9, 1919, pp. 157–168.

We continued for the next few days pressing forward along the eastern bank of the river, which although very crooked and erratic in its course, maintained a general direction to the north. At noon on November 6 we passed the mouth of a tributary stream possibly 70 feet in width, entering from the east. Hereabouts the valley was wide, and there appeared to be much open country. At this point we left the Tamalameque-Cúcuta cattle trail which turned to the east towards Cúcuta. Near here we shot two large female monkeys, which furnished much-needed food, as we had been without provisions for two days.

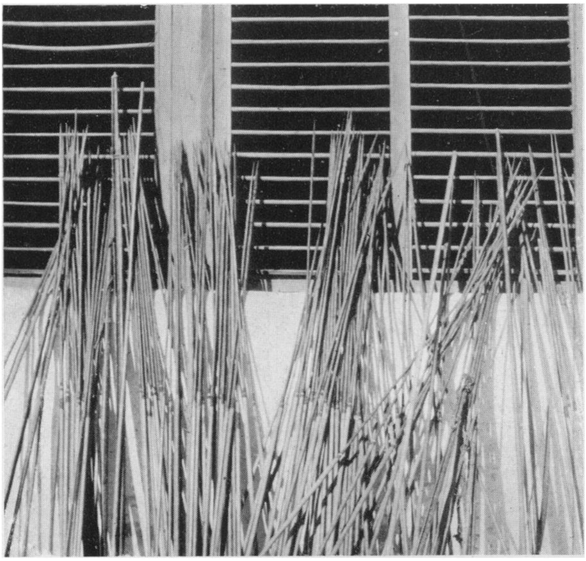

FIG. 3—Arrows and spears taken from Motilone Indians on the Rio de Oro. (Photograph by courtesy of the Carib Syndicate.)

SLOW AND ARDUOUS TRAVEL

From now onward our journey was a monotonous story of slow and arduous travel through heavy jungle and up and down the rock cliffs that bordered the river with little intermission. We passed through country broken by an endless succession of *quebradas* which, because of the frequent change in direction of the main stream, seemed to be running in all directions. We were compelled to follow the river closely, attempts to seek a shorter route being restrained by the fear of losing the river altogether once it should be out of sight or hearing. Nor were our attempts to descend by raft any more successful—we were immediately wrecked in the rapids.

One day (November 20), while a short distance away from and above the river and climbing a 2,000-foot hill, we encountered the first signs of any previous human presence that we had observed since we passed the abandoned fishing camp at the junction of the Rio Tomas. Following the ridge of this mountain we found a few machete cuts which had evidently been made by Indians. This trail we followed with much trouble, as it was very faint. Later we came down to the river again where we found an Indian raft secured on the opposite shore and constructed of two *balsa* logs tied together with *bejucos*, a vine that serves the native as a rope.

Our situation was becoming increasingly precarious. Our limited provisions had been consumed. We shot one or two monkeys and a couple of wild turkeys. These with a few fish were the last game that we secured on the journey. The men were sick with fever and exhausted from lack of food. On the 29th day of the expedition we killed and ate one of the six famished dogs remaining with us, and two more on the next day.

Signs of the Motilones

At this time becoming desperate at the slowness of our travel I decided to strike back a short distance from the river into the highlands and attempt to cut off some distance round the bends. Shortly after taking this course we encountered an Indian trail which for a time proceeded in the direction desired, or practically due east. We went forward quite easily along it for possibly a mile and half but then began to fear that we were going to lose the river, without which I had no hope of ever arriving at a point in the Maracaibo basin. I decided to leave the trail and bear off to the left in an attempt to get in touch with it once more. In passing along the trail we saw four empty houses of the Motilones, two of which had evidently just been constructed, as the palms and *bejucos* which formed them had been freshly cut. Within, however, there was absolutely nothing—neither occupants nor food nor equipment. The huts were of the same type of construction as that in Figure 4.

An Important Indian Trail

While searching below we also came across a well-beaten trail, about four feet in width, following natural easy grades along through the hills and evidently much used. I believe that this is the main trail connecting the divisions of the Motilone tribes separated by the Rio de Oro. We turned and followed this trail to the river. On our way we found fresh skins of plantains, evidently dropped by the Indians, and, on again reaching the river, an Indian *balsa* raft tied up to the bank. A little later we heard a slight noise below and found that a party of five Motilone Indians had come down from the same direction that we had followed and were preparing to embark on the raft. All were well armed with bows and arrows and one with a steel machete. Three of the Indians carried packs on their backs, evidently containing plantains. Apparently they had not noticed the passage of our party down the trail. The peons who had followed me were barefooted and had undoubtedly obliterated my boot prints. The Indians used two long poles to propel their crude raft across the river and, after securing it on the opposite shore, passed into the forest and disappeared.

Building a Raft

At the close of that day (November 22) about a hundred yards from the point where our camp site was pitched we discovered, much to our surprise, nine *balsa* trees with an average diameter of about twelve inches. The existence of these trees at this point was surprising. For the past fifteen miles we had looked carefully for trees of this type and could find none and had decided that we had passed the limits within which they grow. Early next morning I assembled such of the men as were fit to work for the construction of a raft. Of the twelve there were only four who could stand on their feet and effectively use our one axe and machetes. The remaining eight lay around the fire and groaned or talked about the "end" which they believed was very near. These natives possess very little spirit and in danger or during privation are anything but cheerful companions. The nine trees we felled were dragged to the river and fitted together with three cross pieces secured very firmly at the joints with *bejucos*. About midday we had built a very strong raft.

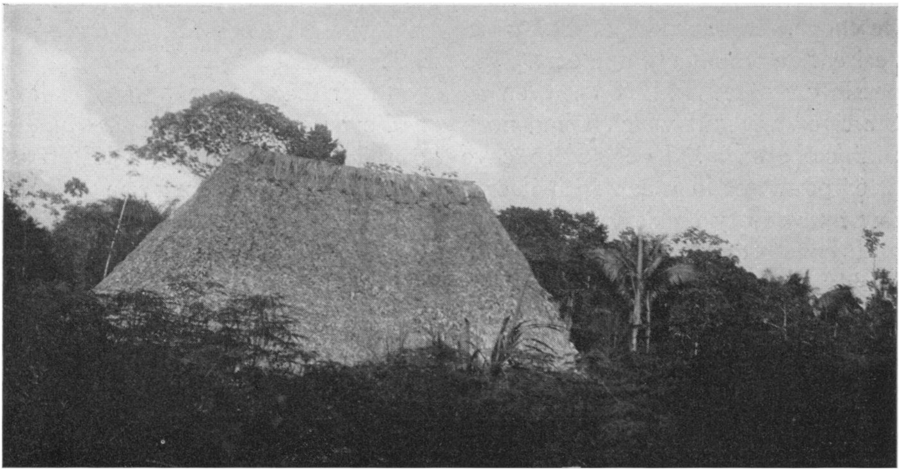

FIG. 4—Motilone hut near the Rio de Oro. (Photograph by courtesy of the Carib Syndicate.)

LAST STAGES OF THE JOURNEY

It was necessary for us to get away from that spot with speed, as the guards I had posted on the cliffs above the river reported fresh signs of Motilone Indians; and I believe had we remained we should have been unpleasantly reminded of their presence before the day was over. We placed all of our equipment and the one remaining dog aboard the raft and started about one o'clock. About a half mile below the point where we embarked we encountered strong rapids. Several times the raft went aground on boulders, but by jumping into the water we managed to get it clear of these obstructions. After passing this point we did not find any other dangerous rapids, though there were many places where the river became narrow and swept around sharp bends. We proceeded along at a rate of six miles an hour with but little trouble.

Two miles below where we launched the raft we entered an entirely different region. The country on either side was that commonly known as the *llanos*, here densely forested. Hills had almost entirely disappeared. A few wild turkeys and other small game were observed in the forests on either side. About two o'clock, and at a distance of 125 miles from the point where we first reached the source of the Rio de Oro, we passed the junction of the Rio Motilone. The Rio Motilone at the point where it joins the Rio de Oro is about 300 feet in width at this period of high water and is but slightly smaller than the Rio de Oro.[6]

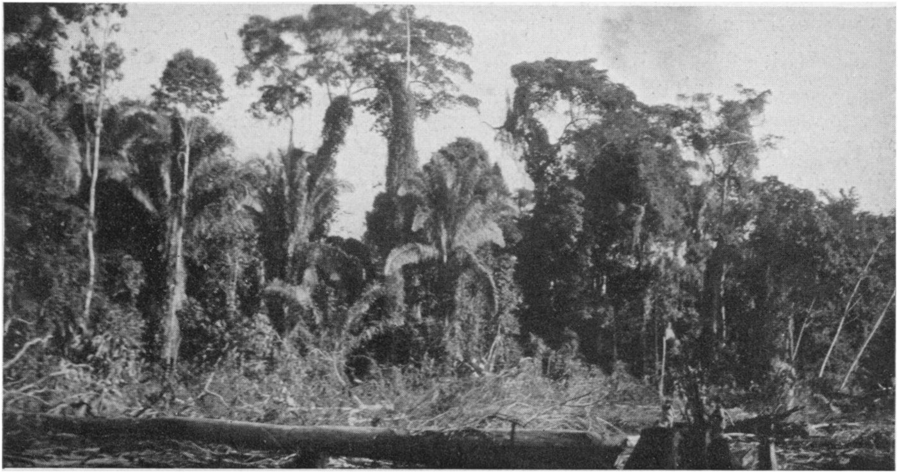

FIG. 5—Jungle on the banks of the Rio de Oro near its junction with the Rio Catatumbo. (Photograph by courtesy of the Carib Syndicate.)

We continued onward for another hour and then landed and prepared a camp for the night on a small beach. Hoping that it would not rain, and much against my better judgment, I selected this as a site contrary to our usual custom. To have encamped on higher ground in this vicinity would have necessitated much clearing with machetes because of the heavy jungle all along the shore. Near this camp site we found a smaller type of plantain known as *guineos*. These were green and about four inches in length but when boiled proved to be very palatable. We gathered many and ate them at intervals throughout the night, as it was the first food we had had for many days. At midnight the rain, which had ceased for about eighteen hours, began once more, and the river gradually rose and finally covered the *playa*, or beach. Rainfall continued until daybreak, and the first light found us standing in water to our waists and endeavoring to keep hold of the raft upon which depended our salvation. Shortly after daybreak the downpour ceased, and the river began to subside until at 9:30 it had receded so much that I deemed it safe to embark, although the current was still bringing many fallen trees and wreckage from upstream.

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[6] **An exploration of the Rio Motilone to its source has been made by Mr. A. Faison Dixon, in a geological reconnaissance from the Colon oil area.**

Now, as well as during the latter part of the previous day, the river swung from an easterly direction to south and southwest and even at times westerly, describing a series of great loops. At one time we probably were only a few miles distant from the point where six days before we had been toiling laboriously on foot.

Arrival at the Oil Wells

On November 24, the 32nd day of the expedition, and at a distance of 156 miles from where we had found the source of the Rio de Oro, suddenly rounding a bend in the river we came in sight of an island covered with cultivated plantains. We next saw a cluster of buildings which one of the peons who had formerly been employed at the wells recognized as the camp of the Colombian Petroleum Company, our objective. As we came into view of the camp the peons, who had asked my permission in the early days of the expedition, began firing their rifles and revolvers in the joy of once more seeing signs of civilization and the hope of soon securing food. When the noise of this fusillade reached the camp the employees of the petroleum company at once rushed for their rifles, believing that they were attacked—not by the Motilone Indians, who have no firearms, but by a force of revolutionists—and it was only when they saw our men discharging their firearms in the air that they knew that we were friends.

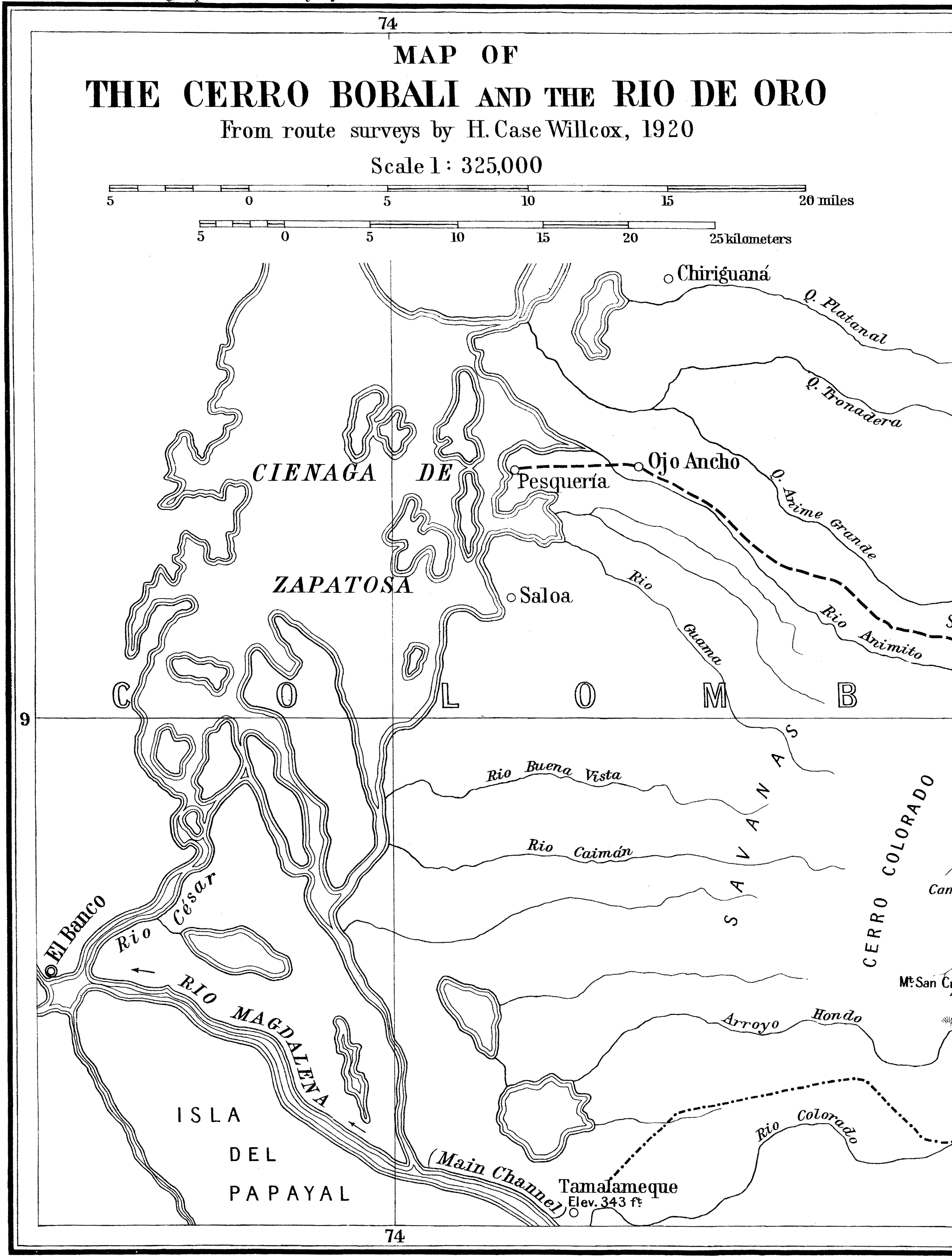
We spent two days at the petroleum camp, during which time we fitted ourselves out with much-needed clothing from the company's commissary and ate a meal nearly every two hours of the forty-eight. The effect of our hunger was so nerve-racking that it was impossible to sleep except for a few minutes at a time.

Departure for Maracaibo

At 2 o'clock on the morning of November 27 the management turned over to my use a canoe and two giant Venezuelans for canoemen. We left quietly to attract as little notice as possible, inasmuch as many parties had been attacked by Indians on the Rio de Oro in the twelve-mile stretch between the petroleum camp and the junction with the Catatumbo.

The country we passed through was *llanos*—great stretches of fairly level land hereabouts covered by gigantic forests of *ceiba*, a soft-wood tree, and *caracoli* and many other hard-wood trees. On the beaches were large numbers of crocodiles, for this was the season in which they lay their eggs along the shores. For this reason it was also a dangerous time to travel on the river, as the Indians hunt these eggs for food. The forests abounded with game. I saw three different kinds of monkeys, deer, tapir, and several species of wild turkey. It was not until we had traveled 90 miles that we saw the first signs of human existence after leaving the petroleum wells.

The American Geographical Society of New York



MAP OF
THE CERRO BOBALI AND THE RIO DE ORO
From route surveys by H. Case Willcox, 1920
Scale 1 : 325,000

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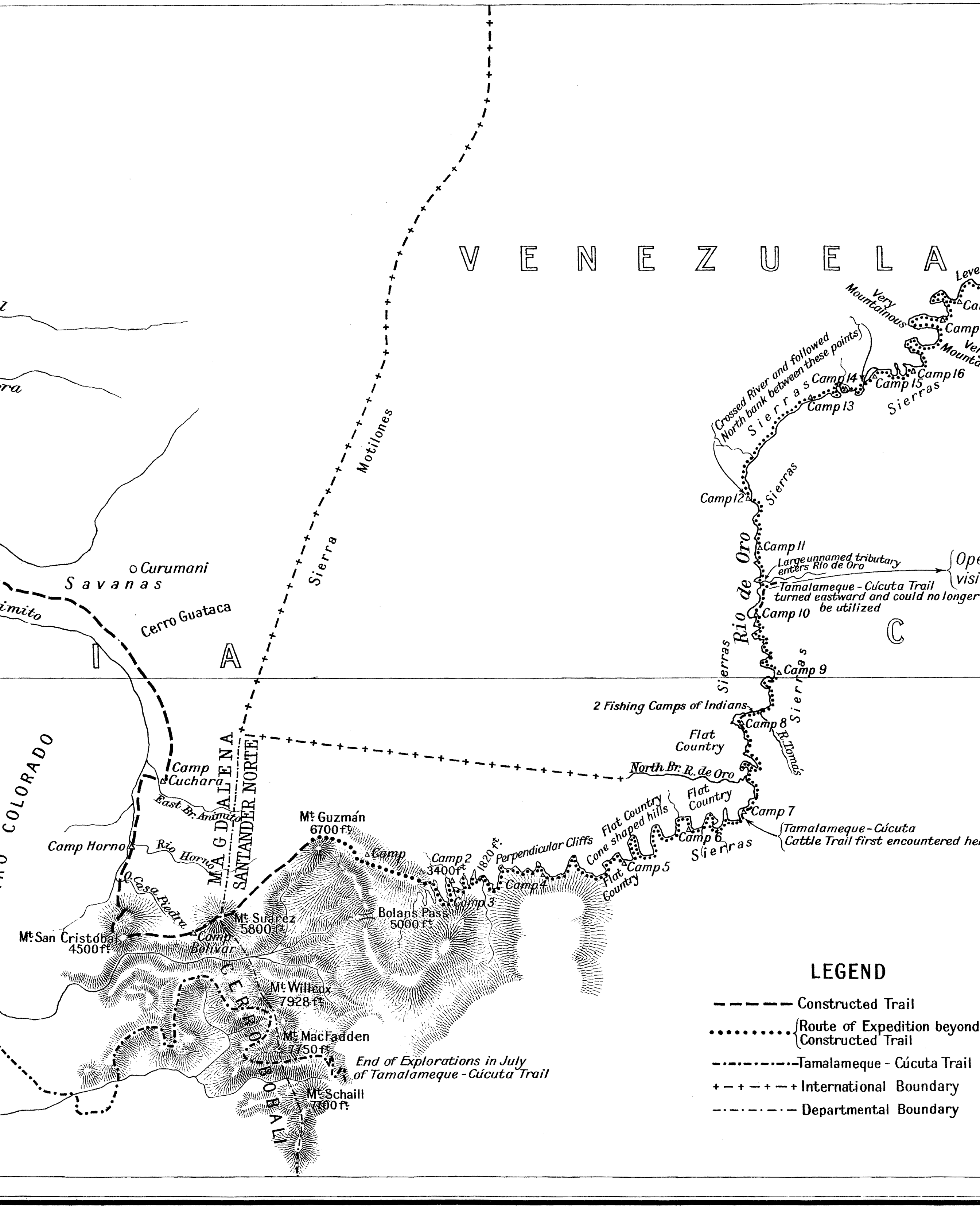
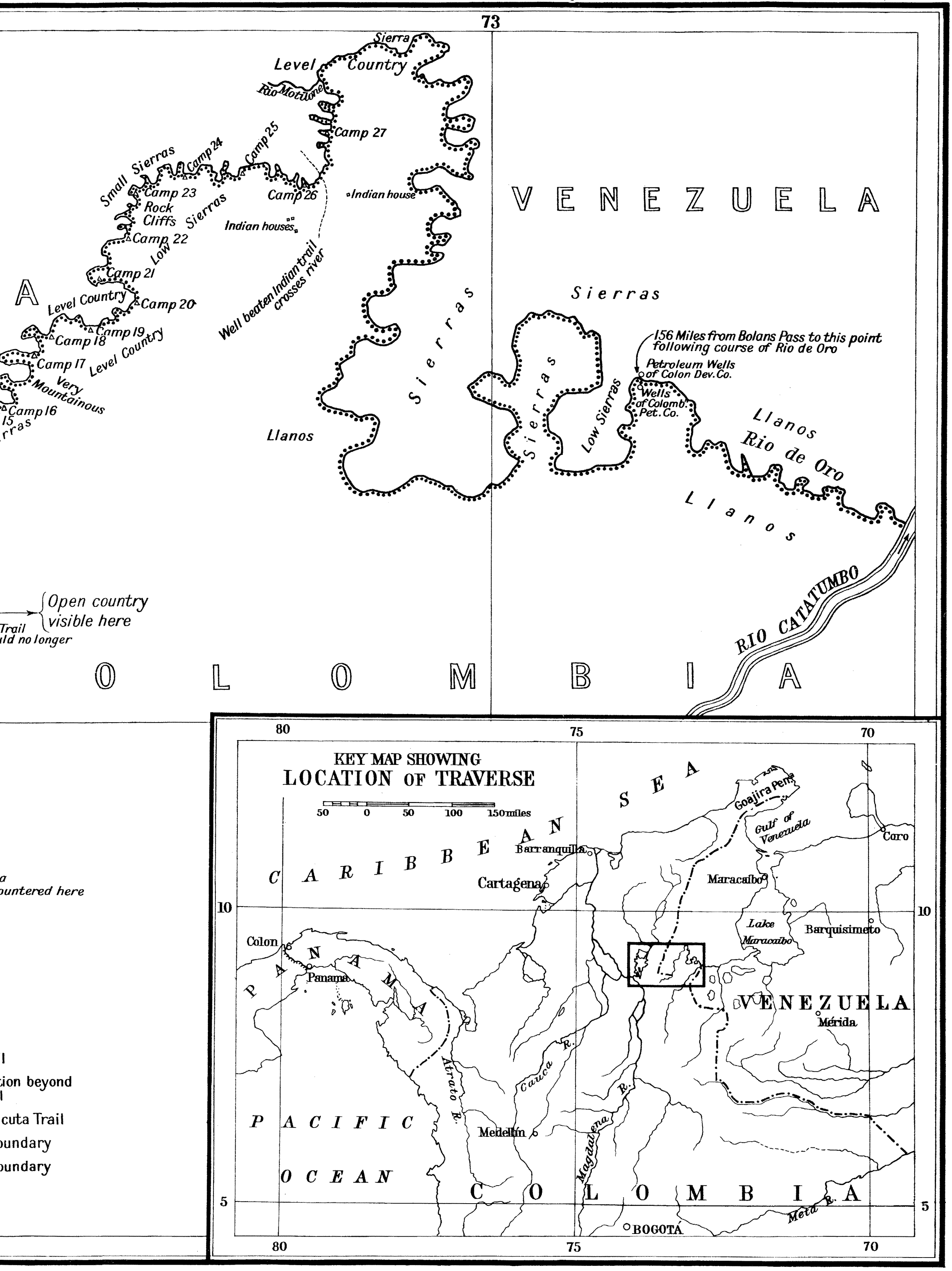

VENEZUELA
Sierra Motilones
o Curumani
Savanas
Cerro Guataca
I A
C
RIO COLORADO
Camp Cuchara
East Br. Animito
Camp Horno
Rio Horno
o Casa Piedra
MAGDALENA
SANTANDER NORTE
Mt. Guzmán 6700 ft.
Mt. Suarez 5800 ft.
Mt. San Cristóbal 4500 ft.
Camp Bolivar
CERRO BOBALI
Mt. Willcox 7928 ft.
Mt. MacFadden 7750 ft.
Mt. Schaill 7700 ft.
End of Explorations in July of Tamalameque - Cúcuta Trail
Camp
Camp 2 3400 ft.
1820 ft.
Camp 3
Camp 4
Bolans Pass 5000 ft.
Perpendicular Cliffs
Cone shaped hills
Flat Country
Camp 5
Camp 6
Sierras
Flat Country
Camp 7
Tamalameque - Cúcuta Cattle Trail first encountered he
North Br. R. de Oro
Flat Country
Camp 8
R. Tomás
2 Fishing Camps of Indians
Sierras
Camp 9
Rio de Oro
Camp 10
Tamalameque - Cúcuta Trail turned eastward and could no longer be utilized
Large unnamed tributary enters Rio de Oro
Ope visi
Camp 11
Camp 12
Sierras
Crossed River and followed North bank between these points
Sierras
Camp 13
Camp 14
Camp 15
Camp 16
Sierras
Very Mountainous
Very Mounta
Camp
Ca
Leve
ra
LEGEND
Constructed Trail
Route of Expedition beyond Constructed Trail
Tamalameque - Cúcuta Trail
International Boundary
Departmental Boundary


73
Sierra
Level Country
Rio Motilone
Camp 27
Small Sierras
Camp 24
Camp 25
Camp 23
Rock Cliffs
Low Sierras
Camp 26
Indian house
Indian houses
Camp 22
Low
Camp 21
Well beaten Indian trail crosses river
A
Level Country
Camp 20
Camp 18
Camp 19
Level Country
Camp 17
Very Mountainous
Camp 16
15
rras
VENEZUELA
Sierras
Sierras
Sierras
156 Miles from Bolans Pass to this point following course of Rio de Oro
Petroleum Wells of Colon Dev. Co.
Wells of Colomb. Pet. Co.
Low Sierras
Sierras
Llanos
Llanos
Rio de Oro
Llanos
Open country visible here
Trail
ld no longer
RIO CATATUMBO
OLOMBIA
a
ountered here
l
tion beyond
l
cuta Trail
oundary
oundary
KEY MAP SHOWING
LOCATION OF TRAVERSE
50 0 50 100 150 miles
80
75
70
10
5
CARIBBEAN SEA
Goajira Pen.
Gulf of Venezuela
Coro
Barranquilla
Cartagena
Maracaibo
Lake Maracaibo
Barquisimeto
Colon
PANAMA
Panama
VENEZUELA
Mérida
Atrato R.
Cauca R.
Magdalena R.
PACIFIC OCEAN
Medellin
COLOMBIA
Meta R.
BOGOTÁ

At 9:30 P. M. the outlines of Encontrados showed ahead of us, and shortly afterwards we pulled up to the docks among some sail and gasoline boats. With the aid of the current my two peons had paddled me a distance of 105 miles in 19½ hours. Encontrados is a town of 2,000 population. In the day time it has a sizzling, humid temperature, which at times reaches 110°. It lies at the southern terminal of the steamer route which connects northerly with Maracaibo. It is also the northern terminal of a short railroad, the Gran Ferrocarril del Táchira, which connects Encontrados with a point in the south called Estación Táchira, a few miles across the international boundary from Cúcuta, Colombia. From Encontrados I secured passage on the biweekly river boat which plies between the town and Maracaibo.

Result of the Journey

I believe that this journey is the only passage made across the great block of territory lying between the Rio Magdalena on the west and Lake Maracaibo on the east and between the latitudes of 10° 30′ N., the approximate location of the disused trail across the Sierra Perijá, and 8° 30′ N., the location of the abandoned cattle trail from Tamalameque-Cúcuta. It is the only exploration made of the Rio de Oro between one of its sources and its junction with the Catatumbo. Its result has been to place on the map 168 miles of river where heretofore some dozen leagues of fanciful watercourse were shown.